

Minnesota State Department of Public Safety

State Fire Marshal Division

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FIRE DEPARTMENT ACCESS ROADS INFORMATION SHEET

PURPOSE:

To establish uniform criteria for fire apparatus access roads and to provide guidance to inspection personnel on acceptable fire apparatus access roads as covered in Minnesota State Fire Code [Here after referred to as MSFC (07).] Section 503.

SECTION 1 — FIRE DEPARTMENT ACCESS ROADS

MSFC (07) Section 503.1.1 requires the installation of fire apparatus access roads for all new buildings and new additions to existing buildings when any portion of the exterior wall is more than 150 feet from the furthest point of fire apparatus access. The requirement for fire department access road applies to all buildings and additions constructed on or after July 10, 2007.

The road should be at least 20 feet in width and capable of supporting the weight of the local fire department's apparatus. The surface of the road should provide for "all-weather" driving; this typically will require a hard-surfaced road. Grass, dirt, and/or rock do not provide a suitable surface. The use of "paving blocks" and similar materials which allow a grass appearance are acceptable as long as they provide a surface capable of supporting the weight of the vehicle.

For buildings from four (4) to eight (8) stories in height, there is an additional need to provide access roads designed for use with aerial apparatus (especially for multi-tenant residential buildings such as apartments, hotels, and dormitories). In these cases, the road widths and surface will have to be adjusted to handle the increased width, weight and turning requirements of these apparatus. In addition, the road should follow the contour of the building at such a distance that effective aerial operations can be conducted.

Fire apparatus access roads can be provided with chains, gates, locks and similar security measures to prevent use by unauthorized vehicles. In these cases, provisions shall be made to provide the fire department with keys or other access to the road.

Where fire apparatus access roads can also be used for general vehicle traffic, Deputy State Fire Marshals can require that these roads or portions of these roads be designated and posted as fire lanes in accordance with MSFC (07) Section 503.3.

For buildings that are protected throughout by an automatic sprinkler system, fire apparatus access roads need only be provided to an approved location (typically the main entrance or “address-side” of the building), to the sprinkler system fire department connection, and to any secondary on-site water supplies (i.e. ponds, lakes, etc.).

RATIONALE:

Fire department access to a building is critical for effective firefighting operations. The access roads must be capable of handling the size, weight, and working width of the apparatus. These will vary based on the individual fire department’s apparatus; the local fire official should be consulted for specific information.

The apparatus must be capable of getting within 150 feet of the furthest portion of the building. This distance is based on the working length of typical firefighting attack lines (working length of 150 feet).

For multi-story buildings, there is additional need for aerial apparatus access and also to provide for the proper aerial working angles. Once again, the local fire official needs to be contacted to determine the appropriate size, width and distances for these applications.

For buildings that are completely sprinklered, the only need for access is to the building itself (not all portions) and to sprinkler and water supply connections. Deputy State Fire Marshals are reminded to encourage the installation of fire sprinklers as a trade-off according to SFMD policy titled, Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems.